

**PROGRAM STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT - Jan. 2000**

**TITLE OF ISSUE:** Handicapped Access at Region and Center Facilities

**ISSUE:** Accommodation of individuals with physical disabilities at federal facilities is required by both federal law (the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968) and state building codes. However, regulations under these authorities apply only to new construction and renovation. Thus there are no legal incentives to upgrade, improve or maintain handicapped accommodations within older buildings in Region and Center facilities. This could become an issue for both EEO and Diversity, as outdated accommodations could be a discouraging factor for applicants with disabilities, who are targeted for recruitment under FEORP, and for hiring, training, development and promotion under Affirmative Action. It is not possible at this time to judge the potential effect on EEO/Diversity issues or the need for any action because there is no evaluation process for the state of handicapped accommodations at Region and Center facilities.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION:** Review present mechanisms for addressing access issues in the Region and Center. Gather and study information on existing and proposed federal and state guidelines for handicapped accommodations, plus information from disabilities organizations, as needed. This will include issues for sight, hearing, and mobility impairments. With this information, develop an access evaluation self-questionnaire for facility managers, and distribute these to each office and laboratory in the region with a request for feedback, including their perceptions of problems and thoughts on solutions by a specific deadline. Collect feedback and prepare a brief report on the results for review and comment by the Program Committee and other EEODAC members. With member comments in hand, contact facility managers (non-confrontationally) regarding revision of existing handicapped access guidelines and their needs (if any). Report revised guidelines and needs to the Directors via the EEODAC Chairperson. As needed, provide aid to facilities managers in locating handicapped aid resources.

**ACTION and TARGET DATE:**

Feb. 28: Submit study plan for Committee review.

Mar. 20: Determine existing policies, mechanisms and employee responses in Region and Center regarding handicapped access issues to avoid duplication of effort.

Apr. 15: Gather and study handicapped accommodation guidelines and create a synthesis suitable for NMFS activities.

May 15: Create and distribute questionnaires to facilities managers.

Jun. 1: Deadline for feedback, distribute feedback report to Committee, EEODAC for comment.

Jun. 5-June 20: Re-contact facility managers for guideline revision and needs discussion.

Aug. 15: Report suggested revision of handicapped access guidelines and facilities needs to EEODAC Chairperson for comment and passing to Region and Center Directors.

As needed: Aid facility managers in locating handicapped aid resources.

**COST:** none

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Heather Fletcher, Donna A. Busch, Linda Stehlik,  
Sarah Babson-Pike, Vincent Guida

APPROVED:\_\_\_\_\_DISAPPROVED:\_\_\_\_\_LET'S DISCUSS:\_\_\_\_\_